

VZCZCXRO1808
RR RUEHGA RUEHQU RUEHVC
DE RUEHHA #0089/01 2901225

ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 171225Z OCT 07
FM AMCONSUL HALIFAX

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1228
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA 0487
INFO RUCNCCAN/ALL CANADIAN POSTS COLLECTIVE
RUEHHA/AMCONSUL HALIFAX 1309

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HALIFAX 000089

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DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/CAN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [CA](#)

SUBJECT: CANADA'S FOREIGN, DEFENSE, AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
MINISTERS ADDRESS 10TH DIPLOMATIC FORUM IN NEW BRUNSWICK

HALIFAX 00000089 001.2 OF 002

Summary

¶ 1. Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs held its 10th Annual "Diplomatic Forum for Heads of Foreign Mission" in St.-Andrews-by-the-Sea, New Brunswick, in mid-September. Seventy-seven Ambassadors, including Ambassador Wilkins, and two Consuls General participated in the two-day meeting. Three federal Cabinet Ministers addressed the diplomats during the event. Minister of Foreign Affairs Maxime Bernier said Canada's two primary foreign policy goals were promoting free and open markets and ensuring that the UN sanctioned, NATO-led mission in Afghanistan succeeded in helping the that country become "secure, prosperous, and free." Defense Minister Peter MacKay said the government of Canada is pursuing a "Canada First" defense strategy built upon three pillars: defending Canadian interests globally (especially in Afghanistan), actively supporting North American defense, and protecting Canadians on national territory. Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs Rona Ambrose said that, during the next session of Parliament, Prime Minister Harper will speak frequently on the idea of "Open Federalism." Although she did not define precisely what was meant by the term, Minister Ambrose spoke of the need for the federal government and the provinces to respect each other's constitutionally mandated jurisdictions while at the same time encouraging cross-competency participation when the other party has a direct interest. It appears likely DFAIT will convene next year's forum in Quebec City. END SUMMARY.

Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

¶ 2. Foreign Minister Maxime Bernier was the first federal Cabinet Minister to address the Diplomatic Forum. He told the diplomats that Canada's two primary foreign policy goals were promoting free and open markets and ensuring that the UN sanctioned, NATO-led mission in Afghanistan succeeded in helping the that country become "secure, prosperous, and free." Expanding on the first goal, Minister Bernier underscored the Government of Canada's position that free markets are indispensable for a modern economy. Citing the benefits that have accrued from CAFTA and NAFTA, Bernier said that strengthening the North American free trade relationship was his top foreign policy goal, but Canada also sees free trade as a vital ingredient in its efforts to promote security, prosperity, and democracy throughout the Americas. Economic freedom and prosperity are crucially linked together. Free democracies, operating under the rule of law and respecting human rights, tend to have stronger economies and are better able to deal with the challenges posed by natural

disasters and human pandemics.

¶ 13. Turning to Afghanistan, Bernier insisted that the world must not allow Afghanistan to again become an "incubator of terror." Canada's military mission in Afghanistan is critical for establishing peace, security, and prosperity in that trouble land. Canada and its allies are working hard to fulfill the "Afghanistan Compact of 2006." Doing so is an enormous challenge, he said, but progress is encouraging. Through Canadian International Development Agency programs and through its military presence, Canada's mission in Afghanistan is supporting the cause of human rights and freedom and is helping to guarantee a more secure world. In conclusion Bernier said that Canada will continue to pursue principled foreign policy positions on important issues around the world with the ultimate goal of helping the people of the world to live secure, prosperous, and free lives.

¶ 14. When the Norwegian Ambassador asked about Canada's views on the north, Minister Bernier responded that Canada sees the Northwest Passage as internal waters and, "We will do what we have to, to keep and protect our sovereignty in the Arctic."

Department of National Defense

¶ 15. Defense Minister Peter MacKay told the participants that the government of Canada is pursuing a "Canada First" defense strategy built upon three pillars: defending Canadian interests globally, actively supporting North American defense, and protecting Canadians on national territory. The mission in Afghanistan is clearly in Canada's interests, especially since terrorism knows no bounds. Canadian military personnel in Afghanistan are, "carrying forward the Vimy Ridge tradition." Canada is also keen on domestic and continental defense as shown by the creation of CANADACOM, to parallel the U.S. NORTHCOM and

HALIFAX 00000089 002.2 OF 002

by the addition of a maritime surveillance and defense element to NORAD. Canada's Department of National Defense expects to increase base spending by C\$5.3 billion over the next five years. The recent acquisition of C-17 aircraft has increased Canada's ability to reach out to the rest of the world and assist countries in need. Returning to the topic of Afghanistan, the Minister noted that the government sought and received a mandate from Parliament for a military commitment in Afghanistan through February 2009. He sees it as part of his job to help Canadians better understand the important role Canada is playing in Afghanistan. The Afghani Ambassador expressed his country's thanks to Canada and all countries that are helping Afghanistan gain stability. The Minister responded by saying, "We cannot afford to fail in Afghanistan, it's just too important a mission."

Intergovernmental Affairs

¶ 16. Rona Ambrose, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs told the diplomats that, during the next session of Parliament, the Prime Minister will speak frequently on the idea of "Open Federalism."

Without defining the term, *per se*, Minister Ambrose said that, under Canada's model of federalism it was paramount that the constitutional partners (*i.e.*, the provinces and the federal government) respect each others jurisdiction. However, when the federal government finds itself with significant "unplanned surpluses," it may make sense for the federal government to direct some spending in areas outside of federal jurisdiction. At the same time, the government will seek to facilitate provincial participation in areas of federal jurisdiction when provinces have a direct interest (*e.g.*, the immigration nominee program). "The evolution of the federation," said the Minister, "requires the federal government to develop innovative ways to adjust." Quebec, through its engagement in UNESCO and la

Francophonie, was the first province to express interest in participating in areas of federal competency. And, following on Alberta's efforts, several other provinces are looking to co-locate their trade promotion offices in Canadian Embassies and High Commissions abroad.

¶7. With this as prologue, the Minister then turned the tables on the assembled Ambassadors and asked them to tell her about their dealings with provincial governments. Immigration was a major concern, with issues ranging from work permits for tradesmen in Alberta and seasonal workers in British Columbia, to mutual recognition of professional degrees, to student visas, and a plea for more information on those individuals who have been denied landed immigrant status in Canada. The Brazilian Ambassador, seconded by the Dutch Ambassador, reminded the Minister that, in addition to the federal-provincial/state dynamic, many countries are now finding that municipalities are becoming new players on the international scene and these actors also need to be taken into consideration in the conduct of foreign policy.

COMMENT

¶8. The annual Diplomatic Forum provides a venue for the Government of Canada to get its message on government policies and direction out to a large segment of the diplomatic corps simultaneously. By holding the event in a different province each year and by scheduling a day for presentations by the host province, the conference also gives members of the Ottawa-based diplomatic community a chance to learn more about the different regions of the country than they might otherwise. Although DFAIT has not yet formally announced next year's conference venue, from discussions with protocol staff it appears likely that it will be held in Quebec City, which will be in the midst of celebrating the 400th anniversary of its founding.
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